Interview with Raymond L. Garthoff

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR RAYMOND L. GARTHOFF

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Q: Ambassador Garthoff, thank you very much for coming in. In counter-distinction to a good many of us retired types, you're still active, I know. It's quite an effort to get this much time out of your schedule. Thank you very much. I wonder if you could start out by telling us, generally, what your background was, what brought you into the foreign affairs field, starting at conception, if you want, or at least birth, which I see was in Egypt. So that's an interesting foreign affairs angle.

GARTHOFF: Well, yes. I was interested in international relations, really, for as long as I can remember. As you say, in a way this began even before conception, because my parents, who are both from Iowa, had gone to Egypt, where my father was treasurer of the American University in Cairo for five years. It was during that time that they came back to the States, married. My mother went back there and they left to return to the United States when I was still an infant. So, of course, I had no direct recollection.

But because of their foreign experience, if you wish, in Egypt, and travels in Europe, I grew up in surroundings in which foreign affairs and the world at large were of natural interest.

There's really nothing much to say, I think, about early years, except to say that while I was, very interested in going into the field of foreign affairs, with the strong interest in

international politics and, political-military affairs, from youth on, I hadn't really thought through any specific career interest or pattern.

I had thought in terms of the Foreign Service and State Department early on, because at that time that was the institution, it is still the preeminent one, but then it was virtually the only institution in this field.

Q: You went to Princeton, where they had a strong international affairs program. Then I notice you took a master's and a doctorate at Yale. What fields were those in?

GARTHOFF: Yes. I, indeed, went to Princeton, not only because of its general standing and reputation, but because of the School of Public International Affairs and the very good program in international affairs, and the opportunity—at that time less common than it is now—to be able to have, in fact, a split major of history and political science and economics, rather than any one department as such.

When it came time to choose a graduate school in 1948, I debated with myself between going to Yale, which at that time had a particularly strong department in international relations in general, or one of the two then very new Soviet affairs centers at Columbia and Harvard. Although I had already developed an interest in Soviet affairs, principally because that was the most challenging and interesting focus in the post-war period, I chose Yale. But I also decided, belatedly in terms of my graduate program, to learn the Russian language, which I had not done at Princeton. So I gave, in effect, about half of my time over the next two years to my regular graduate program, and the other half to intensive study of Russian.

Q: I was going to say, it's not something you decide to do in the next three months.

GARTHOFF: No. What I did, my first year of graduate study at Yale, I took an intensive first-year course in Russian, which at that time was still unusual in universities although now it is quite common, about nine hours a week, mostly with native-language instructors.

I got a start in really learning the language better than I had in, say, learning French at Princeton, or Latin and Spanish earlier.

Then in the summer between my first and second years of graduate study, I took the second-year Russian language course, an intensive course of the language only, during the summer. And in my second graduate school year, I took the fourth year Russian course. By that time, I had the language very well and was able to converse fairly freely and to read freely, and have used it ever since.

In any case, I did take those courses available in Russian history with George Vernadsky, and political science with Fred Barghoorn, and so on, but also the more general courses that had drawn my attention to Yale, with Arnold Wolfers, William Fox, Bernard Brodie, and others.

I received a master's degree after one year study there and completed all the requirements for a doctorate except the dissertation by the end of the second year. I had earlier, when I was still at Princeton, come down to the Department and had gone around and talked with a couple of the officers on the Soviet desk, just getting a general feel for working in the department and also had talked, in that early period, I suppose about 1947, with Colonel (later Ambassador) Bill Eddy, who had moved over from OSS with research work at that time, and who I knew through my parents' acquaintance with him from the 1920s.

I also had an interview, in 1949 at CIA, which was just beginning to develop both its operational and analytical work in the area. They suggested I work there. But in any event, I decided to continue on with my graduate work.

In 1950, I had only the dissertation left, and at that time was attracted in three directions other than the State Department. One was the Central Intelligence Agency.

Q: Where, incidentally, my old history instructor from Yale was running the research, Sherman Kent .

GARTHOFF: Yes. I had met Sherman, actually, when he was briefly—very briefly—back at Yale in 1948 between OSS and CIA, but just in passing, really. Later I was to work for him directly, and got to know him, of course, very well.

In any event, a number of my friends there, including some graduate students and some undergraduate students whom I had gotten to know because of the Russian-language study, were going into the Agency. But also I was urged to stay on at Yale by the Department of International Relations there, which wanted me to become an instructor, to complete my degree and do teaching there. A third was another possibility that had arisen because of an adjunct professor, whose course I had taken and worked with, Nathan Leites, who was with the RAND Corporation, which had just been incorporated two years earlier, just starting off a program of work in Soviet studies. At that time, its work was exclusively for the Air Force.

In any event, I decided, finally, to go to RAND. That was, in a sense, a middle course between continuing an academic career or turning to government service, because it was an opportunity to do research, but both on a classified basis and on an unclassified and publishable basis for the government. So it was policy-directed research, but with an academic approach and standards.

My first major project with RAND over the next year or two also formed the basis for my dissertation, which was on Soviet military doctrine. At any rate, I continued working on various aspects of Soviet political and military affairs at RAND for probably a little longer than really was mutually productive. But in any event, for seven years, from the middle of 1950 to the middle of 1957.

I then had decided I wanted to go into government service.

Q: You had been working, more or less, for the government on contract at RAND?

GARTHOFF: That's right. It was not part of Civil Service. I was working for RAND Corporation, but the work was entirely—

Q: Government-run.

GARTHOFF: That's right.

Q: Were there any other major things besides this project on Soviet military doctrine that you'd like to record during that period?

GARTHOFF: Well, as I say, I actually dealt with a range of subjects, including Soviet foreign policy and developments in the Soviet leadership. This, of course, covered the last years of Stalin's rule and the first years after. So it was a rather active and interesting period. As I say, I did have the benefits of having top secret and some other clearances and so on, so that I was keeping abreast of information and working, even though not in the government at that time.

Q: How did this work with the Air Force? Who was the liaison at RAND? Was it an A-2, intelligence connection, or was it plans and ops?

GARTHOFF: Well, I should say that most of RAND's work was more geared to the broad political and technical context of future Air Force requirements, and much of that I had nothing to do with it. For example, even before I arrived at RAND, in 1946 and '47, RAND began to do some studies for the Air Force on the possibility of artificial satellites of the earth, space vehicles. The larger parts of the organization were involved in studies not specifically on future aircraft and so on, but as I say, on the political and military context for future requirements, and looking at such things as the nature of the strategic balance and future requirements for basing for strategic air power.

The area in which I was engaged in what was then called the Social Science Division included people who were studying and working on the area of content analysis and

also in areas such as historical studies that were relevant to possible future peacetime conflictual and wartime situations. For example, political command and control in the Soviet Union was of interest obviously from many standpoints. And that kind of study.

I had been early in coming out with that original study on Soviet military doctrine, which was then published a little later in a book in 1953, and from these studies and the open publications, as well, I began to lecture at the War Colleges beginning in the mid-1950s.

Some of these projects did involve at least contact and discussion with people in other parts of the government, in the State Department, particularly in INR—OIR, as it then was. In CIA, and in other parts of the White House establishment, which now would be part of the NSC, the OCB and Psychological Strategy Board, that sort of thing—

Q: In general, networking.

GARTHOFF: Yes. So as I say, I really was working in some ways more closely and widely in the government than many people in it. [Chuckles] But nonetheless, I decided after a while that, for me, it was getting into a little bit of a rut there at RAND.

I wanted to go into government service. The thing that at that point, particularly, interested me, and I found, upon making inquiry, that they were also interested in my coming there, turned out to be with the Office of National Estimates at CIA, which was then headed by Sherman Kent and his deputy, Bill Bundy. Above them as the Deputy Director for Intelligence at the time, Bob Amory.

So in the summer of 1957, I left RAND. I then took advantage of what was a new opportunity that had just opened up, beginning the previous year and that year, to travel in the Soviet Union, and went to the Soviet Union for six or seven weeks in the summer of 1957, just on a tourist visa, and was able to travel quite a bit and get a first-hand feel. That was my first opportunity to visit that country. Of course, I found that quite interesting and useful.

Q: By this time, you had a Russian wife, didn't you? Or a wife of Russian background?

GARTHOFF: Actually, I had met my wife-to-be at Yale, where her father was teaching Russian. He had been an officer in the Imperial Army before the revolution, then in the White Army. Immigration. She had been born in Riga, and with her parents, had come to the—

Q: Was she able to travel with you?

GARTHOFF: Not on that occasion, but later. She had come to this country as a girl with her parents in 1939.

Q: Sorry to distract you. You made this trip in 1957. This was before you started in with the Office of National Estimates?

GARTHOFF: Before I started in with the Agency. It then turned out in the fall, when I was back and was doing a little more writing on my own, but also was, in fact, unemployed while I was still waiting for the final arrangements of going to the Agency, that ended up taking longer than anticipated. So for a month or two, a couple of months, as I recall, I did some translating for Joint Publications Research Service, a government-sponsored body preparing Russian translations, while I was marking time and waiting.

Then when my clearances had all come through and this had been arranged, I went to work late in 1957 at ONE, as the person mainly responsible for drafting national intelligence estimates in the area of Soviet foreign policy and general strategy. That involved the foreign policy chapters of annual estimates on the Soviet Union and, of course, a whole series of particular estimates that came up, including in connection with the Berlin Crisis at the beginning of 1958 to 1961, and a number of other things.

The first estimate that was done on Soviet attitudes toward disarmament was in 1958, I believe. One of the very first I drafted was an estimate on Soviet attitudes and positions

with respect to Antarctica, of all things, as we were at that time (1958) beginning to become interested in and work toward an Antarctic treaty, and the question, arose what the Soviet attitude would be, whether they would work cooperatively in that venture or not, and so on. So there were quite a range of subjects in this general foreign policy field, apart from the central questions of Soviet foreign policy objectives in the world and means of pursuing them.

I worked in that capacity, then, until September of 1961, and although I very much enjoyed and found interesting the work there, I was by then interested in moving more directly into something relating to—

Q: Policy?

GARTHOFF: Exactly. Something relating to policy. I also felt somewhat stirred by the atmosphere and the changes when the Kennedy Administration came in. I have a slightly different historical perspective on the changes between the Eisenhower and the Kennedy Administrations now than I did at the time, I might interject. But in any event, I was interested.

Two possibilities arose. One, I was asked to go over and take a policy planning responsibility in ISA, International Security Affairs, in the Pentagon, where Paul Nitze, whom I knew, and Bill Bundy, as his deputy, and Harry Rowen, who I had known at RAND, and others were then establishing the Pentagon's vest pocket State Department, you might say, in ISA. [Chuckles] That was of some interest because of my interest in political-military affairs and Soviet military affairs and so on, which I developed earlier.

The other possibility also was in this field of political-military affairs, and was, in some senses, a counterpart to that in the State Department, where a political-military staff was just being created under Alexis Johnson. This has, of course, since become the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs.

Q: Jeff Kitchen was—

GARTHOFF: A small group headed by Jeff Kitchen. Initially, when I went there, which was a few months after it had begun, really, there were only half a dozen people, and it remained fairly small for some time. There was, for example, one person handling the general subject of munitions control; there was one person following the new area of interest in counterinsurgency; there was one person following base negotiations and the like; one on NATO and planning in that area; and the area that I assumed was following Soviet bloc political-military affairs, in general, and the field of arms control and disarmament, which was related to it but also went somewhat beyond it.

Q: Was this new to you, or had you been doing arms control work before to some extent?

GARTHOFF: Well, I had been peripherally involved in a couple of ways. That is to say, as I mentioned, I had drafted the first NIE on the Soviet attitude toward disarmament a few years earlier. Also, I had not gone to the Surprise Attack negotiations in 1958, I had prepared the guidance paper for the CIA element of the negotiating team, estimating what the Soviet position would be.

In 1961, while I was still with the Agency, there was a large new effort undertaken to look at the whole disarmament-arms control area, under John J. McCloy and Bill Foster. A series of task forces were set up to come up with particular recommendations and so on. This led, among other things, to the creation of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. It also led to some decisions on strategy of handling arms control and disarmament matters, and to the positions that we adopted, both for general disarmament and, more importantly, serious thinking about more limited and more feasible, more possible arms control measures.

Incidentally, a little oddity in that. I was loaned for that effort and worked in a small group headed by General John Hull, that worked up the position on conventional

arms reductions, limitations, and so on. So we came up with a little report with recommendations. Then back at the Agency, I was asked to draft the Central Intelligence Agency's comments on the very paper that I had earlier prepared.

Q: This is very typical of the bureaucracy. [Laughter]

GARTHOFF: [Laughter] So I drafted some comments which went up to the Director on that. Then right at that point, by coincidence, when I left the Agency and went to the Department, one of my first jobs was to draft the Department of State's comments on that same paper I had originally drafted! [Laughter] So I ended up partly drafting the paper and preparing comments from two key agencies.

Q: Needless to say, you were strongly supportive. [Laughter]

GARTHOFF: I sometimes sort of joked about the fact that over the next several years, I would spend my mornings arming, and afternoons disarming, or vice versa, given the different functions in that G PM position, which I remained in, by the way, from September of '61 until January of '68, so it was a rather long assignment for a single—

Q: There's some mention about your being at Brussels, with NATO. But that was just a detail, was it?

GARTHOFF: No, that was my next assignment, which came January 1968.

Q: I'm sorry. I got my dates a little confused here.

GARTHOFF: But before coming to that, I might just mention a couple of things from this other period.

Q: Did you start going around to conferences and that sort of thing, international conferences, during this job, or did that come later?

GARTHOFF: I did attend a number of meetings of disarmament experts at NATO, as the State Department representative, along with people from ACDA, from the Pentagon, and so on. But I might just say a little more specifically that as the handling of arms control and disarmament developed, once the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency had been created in 1961, it was, of course, in a sense, an arm of the Department. Its director during most of this period, Bill Foster, was an advisor to the Secretary, as well as the President, but at the same time it was an autonomous or independent agency. There was no purpose, of course, and no intent to duplicate it within the Department. As I say, while autonomous, it was, in a sense, closely coordinated, probably more so then than it has been since, with the Department. But at the same time, there was need to have someone in the Department directly, coordinating within the Department itself, positions on disarmament and arms control questions, because our positions, taking account of the wide range of interests of the Department as a whole, were often very different from those of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

So I ended up performing that function, and this meant when a particular issue would come up, you know, getting the views of the interested bureaus, the regional political-military affairs desk in EUR, for example, and in many cases, where that was relevant in IO and elsewhere, as well as having our own input for Alexis Johnson. And I was the —I guess, not the nominal, but I was the actual State Department representative at the meetings of what was called the Committee of Deputies, chaired by Butch Fisher, who was the Deputy Director of ACDA. I regularly accompanied the Secretary to the Committee of Principals meetings, which was at that time the senior body which the Secretary chaired, dealing with arms control and disarmament matters.

So that did involve a lot of—

Q: Bureaucratic interplay. It's very important. This is what you need to learn—how the government works.

GARTHOFF: Yes. So doing this coordinating job, really, within the Department and being involved in the inter-agency coordinating work, where I was representing State, while other people from Defense and JCS and so on, were involved, along with ACDA.

Also while I was in G PM, apart from the arms control and disarmament, a special committee was created in 1962 to deal with sensitive political, military, intelligence aspects of space activities, which the Department, again, was represented by Alexis Johnson, its Chairman, and I was the executive secretary of this inter-agency special—NSAM 156 Committee, it was called. To avoid any descriptive title, it took the name of the NSAM that established it.

We considered such questions as what, if any, kind of public references might be given —and the general answer was, “None”—to what was at that time an unacknowledged program in satellite reconnaissance. We considered questions as to whether information from satellite photographic reconnaissance could, or should, be made known to allies, and whether there were ways in which it could be used indirectly, or directly, in confrontations with the Soviet Union.

Q: In other words, whether it should be subject to the NSAM restrictions, or treated that way?

GARTHOFF: Yes. It was partly a matter of simply considering such questions as—well, to take a very limited, very precise example, whether we were prepared to support and accept the implementation of a UN resolution calling for registration of satellite launchings, which would have indirect relationship. Also more direct questions of whether, and how, we would handle any kind of programs to try to get the Soviet Union, in particular, and the world, in general, to accept the idea of overhead satellite reconnaissance as a legitimate activity.

Later, of course, this fed into ways in which such space means could be used as what came to be called a national technical means of verification in arms control. So this had, in some instances, a relationship to the arms control and disarmament field, but in most instances was not, really. I merely mention it as another example of the sort of political-military function that happened to fall in my bailiwick.

And there were other things. For example, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, again with my hat as Soviet bloc political-military affairs expert, apart from the arms control area, I was Alexis Johnson's staff man in a lot of the handling of the work that he was doing and the Department was doing in the EXCOMM during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Q: I see you've got a new edition of your book out on that, by the way.

GARTHOFF: Yes. I did a little book a couple of years ago, on the 25th anniversary, but the reason for doing the book was not just because it was an anniversary, but because I felt there was a lot more that could be said, and particularly on the aspect of the interaction between the United States and the Soviet Union during the crisis. Because while a great deal had been written about the Cuban Missile Crisis in this country, it was almost all in terms of the very richly documented and described deliberations within the EXCOMM, in the White House—or in Washington, I should say. I thought there was more that could be said, and should be said, about the whole interaction in the crisis with the Soviet Union.

I found one interesting aspect of this was that some senior Soviet officials opened up after my book had come out, and would tell me about things. “Yes, you were right on the button here, but here's something you didn't know,” or, “Here's something you got wrong.” And in addition, there was a separate process going on during the last couple of years that I was also involved with in setting up some conferences to discuss the Missile Crisis.

Q: Conferences with the Soviets?

GARTHOFF: Initially, the first one was just Americans, Mac Bundy and Bob McNamara and Bob Dillon and some others, and some scholars in the area, and myself, who had been a peripheral participant and a scholar of the crisis as well, in a sense in both capacities. But we did get Russians into it, also, and the most recent conference was ever held in Moscow in January 1989, sponsored by the Soviet Union. We had Gromyko there for two and a half days, and Dobrynin and others, Alekseyev, who had been the Soviet ambassador in Havana, and some of the Cuban leaders as well. So we got some very interesting new angles there.

Q: Are the results of that in the new edition of the book?

GARTHOFF: I have not undertaken, of course, to report fully on the Moscow conference. That will come later. But I was able to draw on that, and even more on some further interviews I had after the Moscow conference, which had helped to open some doors. I just brought it in at this point to note an example of the different kind of activity that G PM was engaged in, or, specifically, that I was, in G PM, under Alex Johnson. For example, this included doing some of the contingency planning and other things during the crisis on what we would do, for example, if a plane was shot down, as one was on the 27th of October, and on inspection arrangements, which were never implemented, but which we tried to work out, to inspect for the removal of missiles and against their introduction in the future and so on. Incidentally, my counterpart in Defense on some of these studies was a Navy captain on Paul Nitze's staff, Bud [Elmo R.] Zumwalt.

Q: Ah!

GARTHOFF: That was the beginning of a close and long collaboration between Bud Zumwalt and Paul Nitze.

I might just say, also, that while I was in G PM and following this general range of things, I did make two visits—

Q: Ambassador Garthoff, you were just talking about making two visits.

GARTHOFF: During this period in the 1960s, I made two visits to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, simply touching base and seeing what we could learn about interests in the arms control-disarmament field in Eastern Europe. So on these visits, I went to Moscow, and on one or the other of the visits, and in some cases both, to each of the capitals in Eastern Europe, where I talked with people in the foreign ministries and, in one or two cases, also defense ministries, on this general subject. It was a beginning in showing an American interest in what they were doing, as well as trying to learn a little bit more about what they were doing in these countries. Of course, now there have been, and are, many negotiations with representation from the Eastern European countries and so on, but back in the mid-1960s this was a new area.

Q: Quite unique, and in several of the countries, very difficult to do, I would think.

GARTHOFF: Yes. Of course, in some cases, it ended up—well, in all cases, they did cooperate, at least minimally. In some cases it was just minimal. But these visits were in 1963 and 1966, and did not, of course, include East Germany, but did include all the other countries with which we had relations.

Q: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, and so forth?

GARTHOFF: That's it. Yes. I also might interject, just out of sequence, that back in 1959, when I'd been at the Agency, I also accompanied Vice President Nixon on his trip to the Soviet Union and Poland.

Q: I had that pleasure once before. It was very interesting for me, and I'm sure it was for you.

GARTHOFF: Yes. Yes.

Q: What particular impressions did you get of the vice president's operating methods and abilities at that time? I might say that mine were rather high, very high.

GARTHOFF: Mine were, too. I'll tell you, to go back to this for a moment, I was told one day that they were looking for a Russian-language interpreter to accompany the vice president on this forthcoming trip to the Soviet Union, and our front office, the Director's office, was asking would I be interested in doing that. I said, “Yes, I'd be interested.” I doubted that I was the best person, though. I had a little interpreting experience. I used the language, but apart from that, while I was at RAND, I had—not for RAND, but simply on my own—I had accompanied the head of the Soviet Red Cross on a several weeks' tour of the United States in 1956, working for the American National Red Cross. That was the only direct interpreting experience that I had.

In any event, the Agency was interested in having someone, one of its own, go along with the vice president on the trip, if possible, so I went over to the White House for a little interpreting test. I think I passed the test, but I certainly didn't do—nor would I ever have expected to do—nearly as well as the first-rate professional that they had from the State Department, Alex Akalovsky, who, indeed, beginning with that occasion, was the interpreter for several presidents for nearly a decade, and was very good. So it was not only not surprising, but the only correct decision, that he be selected as the interpreter.

But when some word in passing about this was brought to the vice president's attention by his own staff, Nixon took the initiative in saying, “Well, if Allen Dulles has someone that he wants to have come along, by all means, include him in the party.” [Laughter] So I ended up as an advisor, as a member of the party, with no specific function, and relieved of what would otherwise have been a most demanding interpreting requirement, and did go along.

Q: What year was this?

GARTHOFF: 1959. July-August of '59. When this arrangement was made, Allen Dulles and I went over to see the Vice President and talked about things. Mainly, the director was simply reaffirming offering the services of the Agency in any way that could be helpful to him on the trip, any background briefings, so forth and so on, a number of which they wanted, of course, to brief him on in any case, but they also wanted to be responsive to interests of his.

Q: The Agency still considered you their man at this point?

GARTHOFF: Well, I was.

Q: You were at this time.

GARTHOFF: This was '59. Yes, I was. It just occurred to me as we were talking about traveling to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Nixon was quite aware, and said, that he really knew rather little about the Soviet Union, but he was obviously interested in learning quickly, preparing himself for the trip and to make the most out of it. I was very favorably impressed with both his energetic interest in getting the proper briefings and learning things, and his quickness in seeing points and picking them up. So that was a limited contact, but nonetheless, from then on I was involved in preparing, coordinating, really, things that the Agency could do, both for its own interests and for his, in background briefings before the trip and briefings afterwards and that sort of thing. As I say, I was quite impressed with him.

On the trip, incidentally, one thing that had occurred to me was that he might be interested in learning, while we were still on the trip, how his visit was playing in the Soviet press. Of course, the harried delegation, as we were going around, had no time to sit down and try to read daily Pravdas or listen to the Soviet radio or anything of the sort. So I had arranged this in advance and got, through the embassy, to the station, very up-to-date coverage of how his visit was being treated in the Soviet media and so on. He was very interested

in that and very appreciative of it. He was, of course, particularly interested in how it was playing in the American media, but he was also interested in that. So that was one small initiative that had occurred to me and that he was very appreciative of.

Q: This was the time of the famous kitchen debate, was it?

GARTHOFF: Yes, yes. I might interject that by quite a coincidence, my wife was running the kitchen. That is to say, she had been asked, and went for USIA as one of about 20 Russian-speaking American guides for the American National Exhibition.

Q: I remember they used to do that in Bulgaria, too.

GARTHOFF: Yes. This was the first big occasion of the sort in the Soviet Union, and there was, as there has been subsequently, as well, of course, tremendous interest on the part of the Soviet public. So it was a very interesting experience for her, spending that whole summer in Moscow as a guide and interpreter at the exhibition. There were, in fact, two kitchens, in one of which the famous debate took place, and the other was a kitchen of the future, which she was handling at that time.

Q: Full of microwave ovens and so on.

GARTHOFF: It included, for example, a button that someone had only to touch and a little panel opened, and a gadget came out that went around and cleaned the floor, then went back into its “home.” Khrushchev took a look at that and said, “We're not going to have that, even under communism. It doesn't do a woman any harm to get down and wash a floor.” [Laughter]

Q: Great!

GARTHOFF: In any event, I launched into this excursion back to say that I had had that interim opportunity since my original 1957 visit under those particular interesting circumstances of that first high-level, near-summit-level visit to the Soviet Union.

Q: You were there later the same year with McCone, weren't you?

GARTHOFF: Yes. This time I did have to work as the interpreter for McCone's visit of the Atomic Energy Commission delegation around the Soviet Union, which included not only a number of research facilities, but also power reactors, a uranium mine, and a uranium processing plant.

Q: Your vocabulary must have taken quite a leap on that!

GARTHOFF: Yes. I was a little concerned about that. I did know the general vocabulary, but it fell short not just in Russian, but for that matter, in English when we came anywhere near the technicalities of nuclear physics and so on. But I discovered that a combination of "Russifying" common Latin-root scientific words or using literal translations, for example, "heat exchanger" translates out very literally to the Russian, fortunately. It also turned out that in the scientific areas, the Russians all knew English. These same people literally couldn't carry on a three-sentence conversation in English, but the technical language in their fields they knew, for obvious reasons. That, of course, assisted. None of our American scientists knew Russian, but as I say, some of the Russians knew English, a few, and quite a few did in the highly technical areas. So it actually worked out quite satisfactorily. It was quite interesting.

Q: Now we probably better get back to Brussels and NATO. Or do you have something more to say about that period?

GARTHOFF: No. I had entered service with the Department in 1961 as a Foreign Service reserve officer, and was interested in entering the regular corps of the Service. Indirectly, I guess, this led me to be interested in assignment out of the kind of work I was doing in

G PM. I did so on Harlan Cleveland's initiative. I got to know him when he was Assistant Secretary for IO, and when there were a number of arms control matters and various things that I'd come in contact and worked with him on. He was then our representative at NATO Council in Paris, and then after the fall of '67, Brussels. He asked if I would like to join his staff there as Counselor for political-military affairs, a new position in the staff. I was interested. That was, in due course, arranged, and I went there at the end of January 1968.

I had been involved throughout 1967 in our efforts to get under way negotiations that eventually became the SALT negotiations. In fact, in the spring of 1967, I had been slated as the State Department representative on a delegation that was formed on paper. It never developed further, because the Soviets never responded on readiness to sit down at any given time and place and begin those negotiations.

I mention this because it was to have quite an effect later in terms of my being borrowed away a good bit of the time from my NATO assignment in Brussels. Indeed, I had only been in Brussels for a few months when the Soviets indicated a readiness to begin those negotiations, in May and June of '68. I was called back to Washington to work in the preparations for the SALT negotiations. That was under way and, indeed, the positions had been decided on. We were on the verge of announcing a visit by President Johnson to the Soviet Union, at which time the SALT negotiations would begin, to begin on, I think, the date of September 30, 1968.Literally the day before the announcement was going to be made, on August 20 Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia. Of course, the announcement was never made and the talks never began in that administration. There still was a desire by the President himself and in some quarters of the administration to see if those talks couldn't be started in a few months. No one wanted to do that in the immediate aftermath of Soviet-led intervention, invasion of Czechoslovakia. But at the same time, there was a feeling it was in our interest to have those negotiations, so the possibility of their going ahead at some point later was not abandoned. But by mid-September, three or four weeks after the Soviet move into Czechoslovakia, it seemed

to me that it was absurd for me to be sitting around Washington, not doing anything particular, except waiting for what seemed to be the unlikely possibility that those SALT talks would get started. Meanwhile, there was a lot going on back in Brussels, where I was assigned and should have been, so I told them at one point that I thought I ought to go back to Brussels, and if and when they needed me, they knew where to find me.

So I went back to Brussels. Sure enough, of course, things were very active there in the aftermath of the Soviet move into Czechoslovakia.

Q: Just a bureaucratic point. Where were the preparations for the SALT talks centered? Was that ACDA or the Department? A little of both? Who pulled it together, in other words?

GARTHOFF: It was in ACDA at that point. At the very beginning, it had been in the Department, in early '67. Then during '67, it got shifted into inter-agency consideration, and very close cooperation throughout, incidentally, very good cooperation during all that period between State and ACDA. But during '68, then, it was very much in the normal channels of the Committee of Principals and the Committee of Deputies and so on, in which both State and ACDA and Defense had very active participation.

In 1969, after—well, I don't need to go into—

Q: Well, what kinds of problems you faced, NATO, of course, is basically a coordinating-with-the-Allies job, isn't it?

GARTHOFF: Yes. Exactly.

Q: This is what you do there.

GARTHOFF: Yes.

Q: Were there particularly thorny problems that you had trouble with, with the Allies, or whatnot, during that period?

GARTHOFF: One interesting area during that time was in the Nuclear Planning Group, which had been set up, I think in late '66 or '67, as a way of bringing the Germans, in particular, into an association with our nuclear planning in a way that had not occurred when the MLF had fallen through. And that was intended to partly assuage feelings of any discrimination within the alliance, since they were not a nuclear power, unlike the United States, Britain, and France, and in view of the Non-proliferation Treaty [which] was in its final stages of negotiation during that particular period. In any event, that led [Robert] McNamara to take the lead in proposing the Nuclear Planning Group, which then got under way. Because it had a representation principally, at the top, of defense ministers, and therefore for most countries, of Defense Department personnel, that was also the situation in our case, but it also involved an active State Department interest, we worked that out on the spot.

The principal representative at the staff level for the NPG working group that met between the semi-annual meetings of defense ministers was the senior Defense Department representative in the US NATO mission, at that time, Tim Stanley. I served as, in effect, his deputy. When he wasn't there, I sat in the chair. But it was a mixed Defense-State staffing, and working on the problem, which was, of course, entirely appropriate. After all, we were the United States mission to NATO, and it integrated State Department and Defense Department personnel. There were occasionally minor frictions, but it generally worked pretty well.

Q: I always found that US Government integration in the field was infinitely easier than it was in Washington.

GARTHOFF: Yes.

Q: I tried to struggle with both.

GARTHOFF: Yes. Another subject that came up for consideration at that time were the first studies that were made on mutual force reductions in Europe. Negotiations on that subject, the ill-fated MBFR negotiations, didn't get started until much later, 1973, but NATO first proposed such mutual force reductions in 1968. So we had to get under way some staffing on that, which had not really been done in Washington, and was then done to some extent in Brussels. Negotiations never got under way, so it was an exercise which didn't, at that time, lead to anything, but in a few years it would.

I might say that more generally, I think the coordination, certainly at that period, between the different elements, which is to say State and Defense, in the mission to NATO, worked quite well.

Q: Did you have Cleveland the whole time you were there?

GARTHOFF: No, Cleveland was there until some months into the Nixon Administration, when he was succeeded by Bob Ellsworth.

Q: Ah, yes.

GARTHOFF: So my time there was working under both of them.

I was, again, in the summer of 1969, back in Washington briefly, in connection with SALT, and when the SALT negotiations were then definitely scheduled for later that fall of 1969, I was called back to Washington again and named the executive secretary of the delegation, and was there for the preparations for that negotiation, and then off to Helsinki in November-December 1969. For that year, essentially, from the fall of 1969 through the fall of 1970, I was nominally assigned, still, in Brussels, and was occasionally there, but most of the time I was in either Helsinki or Vienna, where the SALT talks rotated for the

first couple of years, or Washington, in connection with the preparation for them, and only intermittently back in Brussels.

Q: Really, Brussels was just a place where you got your shirts laundered?

GARTHOFF: Well, my wife was in Brussels, but I was just there sporadically.

Q: As executive secretary of the SALT delegation, this sounds like it involved an awful lot of administrative work. Or was it basically a substantive job?

GARTHOFF: That depended, comparing it with later incumbencies and so on. It depended a great deal, of course, on the head of the delegation and the way he would want to use someone. Yes, it did involve coordinating an administrative role, but most of that my able deputy picked up, Sid Graybeal, who was from the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. I worked very closely, even more so than people from his own agency, with Gerry Smith during that time.

Q: Gerry was negotiator of that whole ...

GARTHOFF: He was both the Director of the Arms Control Agency and the chief SALT negotiator. In the latter capacity, I was, in effect, his—

Q: Chief of staff.

GARTHOFF: Yes.

Q: People have criticized very much that same man holding both jobs. What was your feeling? Was it good or bad?

GARTHOFF: I think that—

Q: It depends on the man, obviously.

GARTHOFF: It depends on the man; it depends on the administration and the role of an agency, in this case, ACDA, what role it would play and various other things. I think probably in general and in principle, it probably is better to have the two jobs separated.

In the particular case in 1969 until January 1973, when Smith left, it worked very well, because he had an excellent close relationship with Phil Farley, who was his deputy and who was running the agency in his absence. I don't think there was any disadvantage in the arrangement in practice at that time at all. If anything, perhaps an advantage to it. But certainly Smith gave his primary attention to the negotiating job, and he was able to do that because he did have a very capable person who he had full confidence in, in effect, managing the agency.

As I say, it was simply because of the personal relationship and so on, I was working more closely with him, even though I was from the State Department, than others, even to the extent where because I was, in effect, handling all of the communications flow in and out, I even saw, for example, ACDA eyes only, administrative or other messages and so on. But my role, for one thing, there were meetings usually several times a day and so on, of just the five presidentially appointed delegates and myself. So I was the link between —obviously, Paul Nitze, representing Defense, or General Allison, representing JCS, managed their own staff components, which were part of the overall delegation, but as far as the—

Q: Who were the other two presidentially appointed men?

GARTHOFF: The others, initially, Tommy Thompson, and after the first session or two, he was unable, for reasons of health, to continue on, Jeff Parsons from State, and Harold Brown, who was at that time out of government, president of the University of Southern California, was there as a representative based simply on his scientific and technical background, in that sense a public representative, if you will, or scientific. So he had no supportive staff of his own, so to speak.

And while there were some elements that were, in a sense, separate, as far as the State and ACDA, it was more true, naturally, of the Defense and JCS, which also were separate from each other. But if the delegates decided at a meeting, let's say, some morning that we ought to do a study of such and such, when we left the room, I would tell Sid, my deputy, “We want to have a study of such and such, so get people from each of the components.” He would then call a meeting. So the Defense and the JCS people would have been told by their own principals that such a study was coming up. Or in other cases, where Gerry or Gerry and I had decided that something ought to be done, we'd simply initiate it ourselves. It was this sort of joint State-ACDA executive secretary group that would then go ahead and do it, bringing in people, both to tap their expertise and also to keep them involved and keep them happy, in effect.

Q: Was this a fairly happy ship, on the whole, with all these relatively prima donna types? Or at least several of them are in this group. Were there troubles?

GARTHOFF: Well, Gerry kept it as a collective group as the senior delegates, even to the extent of usually filling them in on personal, strictly background communications that he would get often from [Henry] Kissinger, things that Kissinger thought were going only to Smith. But Smith was unhappy with that kind of back-channel arrangement. He considered this to be a delegation that should function as such, and he didn't want to be responsible for cutting the other delegates out from things that he thought was appropriate. Now, there were a few exceptions, but as a general rule, this was his approach to it. This helped, because they realized he was doing this, that he was reaching out, in a sense, to keep them informed and involved.

There was a point of friction developed from the Defense staffing people on the delegation and back in the Pentagon at one point, in which they got [Melvin] Laird to make some complaint to the White House about the way the delegation was operating. As far as I could tell, as far as Gerry could tell at the time, this was not something that Paul Nitze was

personally responsible for. In any event, it was handled through Smith and the delegation, including Nitze and Allison, presenting a solid front.

There certainly was some resentment from some of the Defense people, in particular, and some of the JCS people, at the fact that the informal negotiations that we got into, the informal contacts and discussions with the Russians, was carried out principally by me, partly because of some of this feeling that they were cut out of the real action as it increasingly developed.

I did this often accompanied by someone else, but it was still either Jeff Parsons, usually, or someone else of a few people from State or ACDA, mainly because it would have defeated the whole purpose to be having a mini-delegation at lunch and discuss something privately, whereas I could, and did, speak, in effect, for Gerry.

Indeed, a large part of this developed precisely because the Soviet head of the delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Semenov, was not prepared to conduct the kind of exploratory discussion with Gerry Smith that Smith very much wished he would. Instead, Semenov designated, privately, two of his people to meet with me to conduct these talks. So he was once removed from areas in which he didn't have that much expertise, and that also cushioned him in terms of his responsibility. You know, it couldn't later be said that he said something if it was one of his people who could be disowned, that sort of thing. So while Gerry Smith was quite prepared and wanted to engage in this kind of exploratory discussion to a greater extent than he was able, simply because of Semenov's style, this other arrangement evolved. In any case, probably a large part of it would have had to be at this sort of second level, but it more heavily evolved to that because of Semenov.

So of course, all of these conversations and things were—

Q: Can you pick up from there?

GARTHOFF: Yes. I was describing our procedure in the SALT I negotiation, where I was responsible for doing a great deal, most, of the informal exploratory conversations with members of the Soviet delegation. Of course, I reported these quite fully, not only to Gerry Smith, the head of the delegation, but normally to the delegation as a whole—that is, to the senior delegates, and in memcons and cables back to Washington.

Nonetheless, as I say, there was a certain amount of resentment from some of the Defense people, in particular, and perhaps some of the JCS people, about the fact that this sort of key part of the negotiation was strictly in this State-ACDA hands. But generally speaking, because Smith was so determined to treat the senior delegates as a delegation, I think he managed to maintain that unity of a kind which was later to prove costly to General Allison, the JCS member, when he was, in effect, purged, along with most of the State Department and ACDA people who were involved in SALT I at the beginning of 1973, when a wholesale change took place in the second Nixon Administration. But that's moving a little ahead of things.

So to come back to our first point of departure into this line of conversation, my role was primarily as sort of Gerry Smith's right-hand man, both in coordinating things within the delegation and in our communications back to Washington, and in exploring things with members of the Soviet delegation. All of the official communications were channeled and sent back, of course, and had to have the initials of either myself or Sid Graybeal for any reporting or other message. There was back-channel communication by different agencies, specifically and particularly, regularly Defense and JCS, and when appropriate, State and ACDA, too. But the delegation reportage of all kinds was, of course, from the delegation, and in the rare cases where there was a divided recommendation on a point, of course that would be reported back with Ambassador Smith giving his recommendation and indicating if one or another principal delegate had a different view, what his views were.

Q: Let's get a little bit oriented on timing here. When was SALT I actually completed?

GARTHOFF: We began in November 1969, and it concluded in May 1972. During that period, incidentally, I might just recall that the meetings were held usually for a period of a month or two, and then with a gap of a month or two of preparations back in capitals, and again a month or two in the field. In the field, alternating between Helsinki and Vienna, the reason being that we had a preference for Vienna, the Soviets had a preference for Helsinki. At one point, Secretary Rogers had indicated in a general way that Helsinki was acceptable, and that led the Soviets to dig in a little bit for their preference. But we resolved this, finally, by splitting the difference, so to speak, and alternating between those two locations. This was administratively somewhat burdensome for both, however.

Q: Quite a logistic problem, I would imagine.

GARTHOFF: Quite a bit, because we had extensive files and we had to have, of course, our own Marine security unit and this sort of thing. We were in entirely separate quarters from the small embassy in Helsinki, and we were not in separate quarters, but nonetheless, an additional burden on the facilities in Vienna when we were there. This was resolved by switching for SALT II, beginning in November 1972, to Geneva. The SALT and subsequently START negotiations have been there ever since.

Q: Meanwhile, as far as you personally were concerned, all this time you were Deputy Director of PM?

GARTHOFF: In the beginning, I was assigned still at US NATO. But from September 1970 on, I was a deputy director of PM. At that time, there were only two deputies. Ron Spiers was the director, and Tom Pickering was his real deputy, and I was the other deputy but in reality only on occasion. That is to say, when I was back in Washington between SALT negotiating sessions, I was mostly involved in work, still, of course, on the SALT

preparations, although I sometimes did other things in PM when I was there. But generally speaking, I was pretty much tied up in SALT.

On the other hand, SALT was an important activity in PM's purview, and so as a deputy director of PM, I was a the regular Department representative on the verification panel working group, as it was called, the main working group for the SALT preparations, and went with the under secretary to the verification panel meetings. That was initially Elliot Richardson, and later Jack Irwin.

Q: Two good lawyers.

GARTHOFF: Yes. I guess to take, at this point, a step further, at the beginning of the SALT II negotiations, a first session was held in November-December 1972 in Geneva. Prior to that time, after SALT I had ended in the spring of '72, Jeff Parsons had left the delegation. Secretary Rogers had designated me as the State Department delegate representative, but had gotten a communication back from the White House, from Al Haig, saying that the President didn't want to make any changes of any kind in the delegation, so no formal change was made.

So I went to Geneva with no formal change in designation, but, in effect, as the State Department representative. We brought in a new executive secretary for the delegation and so on. It later turned out that the main reason that the President hadn't wanted to make any changes in the SALT delegation at that time, that is to say, in the period before the 1972 elections, was because he had in mind subsequently making a wholesale change of the delegation, and that was then done in January 1973, when Gerard Smith resigned and departed. Alex Johnson was named as the new head of the delegation. It was initially intended that it would be an entirely new delegation, but Paul Nitze objected very strenuously and, ultimately successfully, that he wanted to remain on the delegation, and was permitted to do so. There was a purge not only of the Arms Control and Disarmament

Agency after Smith left, but also of those involved in work on SALT in the Department and in the JCS.

Q: It certainly produced some extreme changes, didn't it, in higher representation? The DoD representation.

GARTHOFF: There were changes there, too, but as I say, Paul Nitze did succeed in remaining on the delegation.

In any event, that marked a new phase in the negotiations, and that changed the delegation and also was a period when I was no longer with it.

Q: Then what did you do?

GARTHOFF: I remained a deputy director of PM, and was there in my third year, which would have ended in the fall of 1973, but it soon became clear that I was not only off the SALT delegation, but also out of the East-West negotiating and arms control negotiating business.

Q: This was because of Defense Department interjection, do you think?

GARTHOFF: No. I've been hesitating here whether to get into all this.

Q: All right. It's up to you.

GARTHOFF: I think I will.

Q: I think this kind of thing is historically interesting.

GARTHOFF: Yes. Let me go back, then, and say this. I first learned about this when Alex Johnson called me in one day in January 1973. He had, of course, just been named the

new head of the delegation. Also, I had been working for him, in effect, in PM and had been most of the time ever since I'd gone to the Department in 1961.

Q: You'd known him a long time.

GARTHOFF: Exactly. But he said, really, for my own good, I ought to go off to a regular Foreign Service assignment; I'd been too long in this area. But in addition, he said, “The President wants to have a whole new delegation.”

In any event, I learned later that there had been a conversation between the President and Senator Scoop Jackson back in June of 1972, in which Jackson had suggested, or urged, that the SALT delegation be completely revamped. Apparently, the President had agreed to this perhaps because he, himself, wanted also to make a change in it. However, the President did not want to make any change before the elections, and therefore waited until after the election, because the delegation had already been prepared and gone off just at the time of the elections, for that first negotiating session. It was in January of 1973 that this all took place.

I then stopped working on SALT matters, stopped attending, by late January, the meetings of the verification panel and verification panel working group on SALT matters. But I continued to do so, as I had already been, on the new area of MBFR, because this fell within the purview in my PM job. I think after I'd attended one of the first of these sessions with Irwin, I, again, was called in by Alex Johnson, who explained that, well, I was not only off of the SALT negotiations, but, in effect, should be out of the line of fire on these matters. He didn't say this, but, in effect, I was—

Q: You were too overexposed.

GARTHOFF: Yes. So although I had, and did for a little while in early '73, continue to chair the inter-agency working group on MBFR while “Jock” Dean, Jonathan Dean, who had

been doing that, was off heading our delegation to some preliminary talks that took place in early '73, preparatory to the formal MBFR talks, which began later in '73.

But in any event, it was time, clearly, for me to find a new assignment.

Q: By this time, were you in the regular Foreign Service?

GARTHOFF: Yes.

Q: You were an FSO?

GARTHOFF: I had entered in 1961 as an FSR-2 and been promoted to FSR-1 in '67. Then in 1971, I had lateral entry into the regular Foreign Service as FSO-1.

Q: You got into the Inspection Corps about this time, did you?

GARTHOFF: No.

Q: Or is that just a special kind of inspection?

GARTHOFF: At this point, I was told that—it was suggested to me that I would be—well, I think the term may have been used, actually—"out of the line of fire," if I went to the Senior Seminar for a year, and that by then—meanwhile, that I wouldn't be forgotten—that circumstances would be more propitious to come back into something interesting at that point.

So that suited me fine. I had been proposed for the Senior Seminar about ten years earlier, I think in 1964. At that time, Alex Johnson and Jeff Kitchen told them, "No, no, we can't let him go." [Laughter] "Too essential." But by 1974, it was more convenient. And I must say I found it, in a sense, an interruption at that point in my career, but I not only enjoyed it, I thought it was very useful, and I think it's a very good institution. I have a very high regard for it.

Q: It seems to be fascinating. I went to the War College, myself, but everybody I've talked to says this is great.

GARTHOFF: I think it really is. Among other things, the fact that—at least I think this is still true of the program; it was then—that it included getting out and around this country and meeting people and seeing various walks of life, as well as various parts of the country and so on. It's simply a very useful experience for everyone, including Foreign Service officers spending a good deal of time abroad, focused on foreign-policy matters, to have that exposure.

By the time that the Senior Seminar assignment was coming to a close, the Director General put my name in on two different occasions for possible appointments as ambassador to Mauritania, in the first place, and Togo, in the second, along with the support of the Assistant Secretary. But it became clear by the second time that the Secretary, by then Henry Kissinger, was not going to approve me for any ambassadorial position, or from what appeared to be the case, for any other position.

Q: Was this presumably because of his feeling you had been too independent in your talks? Not that you weren't fully authorized by your boss to be, but there was a certain amount of friction between Henry and Gerry.

GARTHOFF: Yes. I put it a little differently. I think it was a feeling that the delegation, in general, but Gerry and myself, in particular, had been too activist and showed too much initiative.

Q: Initiative and independence, to some degree.

GARTHOFF: Yes. There wasn't anything that was a matter of real indiscipline—and certainly nothing that was contrary to instructions, but we were more active and more

committed to getting something done, rather than maybe to modulating and managing the degree of progress in a way that he had wanted to do.

Q: So you had to wait out Henry.

GARTHOFF: So I had to wait out Henry. The Inspection Corps seemed like a good place to do that. Just by chance I had run into the Inspector General at one point in the hall a little earlier. He asked me if I was ever available and interested, and that he would certainly like to have me in the Inspection Corps. Well, I hadn't been at the time, but that sort of gave me the idea. So at this point, I inquired and found that, indeed, they would like me to go there. So that became my ongoing assignment initially for two years, and extended for a third.

Q: I would have looked forward to that. As a matter of fact, I was once assigned to the Inspection Corps briefly, and then was yanked back to something else. But it would be an awfully good way to see a lot of different problems and places.

GARTHOFF: Absolutely. No, I found it—in fact, I had expected it to be worthwhile in this respect, but it was even more so than I had anticipated, than I had realized. But of course my career, as a Foreign Service career, had been irregular or unusual.

Q: Well, specialized.

GARTHOFF: I had never served in a regular embassy, and didn't until I was ambassador.

Q: So you needed to see how one worked a little bit.

GARTHOFF: Yes. I had a lot of relevant experience, but most of it, or much of it, was not in line with Foreign Service responsibility. So apart from whatever I could contribute—and I think I did—I certainly learned a great deal from that experience involving, of course, as

you know, seeing, indeed, looking hard into all aspects of operation of a wide variety of missions, that is, in embassies in different parts of the world.

Q: Name a few that you inspected, to give an idea of this variety.

GARTHOFF: I inspected, for example, the embassies in Paris, Rome, a special short inspection of the embassies in Madrid and Lisbon, and later, the last one, Ottawa. That's sort of one complex. Another quite different complex in two different inspections were Manila and Bangkok and Rangoon and, of course, in all cases, the consulates, as well. And in the Middle East, Syria, Iraq, where we then just had an interests section, Israel, Jerusalem, Amman. And in Latin America, Quito and Lima.

Q: My gracious, you really covered the world!

GARTHOFF: And also Chad and the Central African Empire, as it then was, and Gabon and the Cameroon. That was my first inspection, actually, the one in Africa. So this became a good variety. I was in Bangkok at the time that Phnom Penh and Saigon fell, so was close to that, and at a time, also, when there were important questions raised as to the future of our presence—not of the embassy, as such, but our military presence in Thailand. Well, there were particular political-military aspects, shall we say, of the inspections in Thailand and in the Philippines, but other than reciting the list of places elsewhere, to sort of indicate in a general way the very wide range of different circumstances.

Q: Unless you had some extraordinary problem that was worth mentioning, but probably most of them are still—one has to be a little careful about the actual substance. The interesting things are a little too juicy for history, perhaps yet. I don't know.

Then how did the Bulgarian appointment come about?

GARTHOFF: I was, of course, available for reassignment. As I say, I had chosen to spend a third year in the Inspection Corps, but was looking for a new assignment in the spring of '77, which happened to be a new administration. I was interested, and some people coming in the new administration also asked me, about returning to the field of arms control negotiations. I had earlier made known my interest, a couple of years earlier, in being considered for an embassy, and I had then made known my interest in Eastern Europe, in particular.

I mentioned that the Director General, back in '73, had, in fact, raised my name in connection with a couple of African embassies, in part because he felt that at that time, Eastern Europe might still be too close to the East-West relations that I had just been taken out of. Of course, he was, himself, someone who had experience in serving in the White House in an earlier administration and in Eastern Europe. It was Nat Davis at that time, our predecessor—my predecessor.

Q: A predecessor of mine, too, by a several years.

GARTHOFF: Yes. So I didn't do anything about specifically raising—or perhaps at some point I was asked and did indicate again an interest. In any event, at some point I was given an indication that particularly when Paul Warnke had been named and his selection had run into some flak on the Hill, that there was some reservation about naming me, too, to a senior position in the arms control field.

In any event, I got a call essentially out of the blue one day, offering me the position in Sofia. I was delighted. So I think it was—I take it there was, on the one hand, the feeling that I was deserving and with appropriate experience for this assignment, and on the other hand, at the same time some reservation about putting me back into a position of prominent attention in the arms control field back “in the line of fire” of circles where it might make some difference, specifically on the Hill, from Senator Jackson, in particular.

Q: Was Jackson still alive? I was trying to remember when he died.

GARTHOFF: Yes. So in any event, it was that conjunction that led to that decision on their part. I don't know, for that matter—I'm not really sure what my own choice would have been. It might well have been for Sofia if I'd been given a choice between Sofia and a deputy—

Q: Let's face it. The title of ambassador is worth something, aside from anything else.

GARTHOFF: Oh, yes. Absolutely. And for that matter, I had—I didn't on this occasion, only because I wasn't asked, but I may have earlier expressed something of an interest specifically in Bulgaria. But in any event, I think it was purely a question of availability, but it was a happy coincidence, as far as I was concerned, because I had felt from my visit to each of the posts in Eastern Europe, as I mentioned earlier, on a couple of occasions that Sofia, in a way, was something of a sleeper.

Q: Well, physically, as a place to live and whatnot, it's very much a sleeper.

GARTHOFF: Yes. I found it interesting, indeed, and this goes on to that assignment, in effect, because it was an opportunity for me, who had been studying the Soviet Union for my whole professional life, and in a sense, therefore, with an interest in communist societies, to observe a small communist society on a basis where you could observe fairly fully, and also in terms of Soviet-East European relations. Obviously, it is something which importantly differs in each instance. Still, this was one sort of window of looking into the overall Soviet-East European relationship, and Balkan diplomacy, the Bulgarian-Yugoslav and Bulgarian-Yugoslav-Greek-Turkish relations and so forth.

Q: Yes, the Macedonian problem.

GARTHOFF: Yes. Those were all things that I, indeed, found interesting.

Q: Were there any specific developments while you were in Bulgaria, specific opportunities to collaborate or negotiate? There were damn few when I was there. [Laughter]

GARTHOFF: Very few, indeed. I will mention them in just a moment and can do so briefly. I might mention before that, when I met [Todor] Zhivkov on presentation of my credentials, and chatted with him, about the first thing he said to me was that he understood that I knew a lot about Soviet missiles, and I wouldn't find any missiles in Bulgaria. Of course, I assured him I hadn't come to Bulgaria to look for Soviet missiles; I was interested in Bulgaria and in Bulgarian-American and American-Bulgarian relations.

I happened to be there at the time when Bulgaria was the last of the East European countries in line in this respect, as well as some others, in American policy attention, to negotiate and sign a little agreement removing restricted areas of travel for our representatives, so that we were put on the same basis as all other countries. Of course, there were certain limited border zones and so on, but the discriminatory political restraints of not being able to visit, or having to have special permission to visit parts of the country —

Q: You could drive to Bucharest and not take a long detour around, and this sort of thing. [Laughter]

GARTHOFF: Exactly. So that was one small accomplishment which happened to come due for Bulgaria on my tour.

There was one other incident when, at one point, the Bulgarians began to jam Voice of America again.

Q: Yes, they were jamming it when I was there, too, all the time.

GARTHOFF: They had stopped at a point, a few years before I was there, but for some reason started up again. After I protested that, they stopped again, knocked it off. There was a renewal of exchange agreements, things like that, strictly routine.

Q: Were we still participating in the Plovdiv Fair? That used to be a fairly big event of my era.

GARTHOFF: Yes.

Q: That was something to do.

GARTHOFF: Yes. Did you have any USIA exhibits?

Q: We had the window downstairs.

GARTHOFF: I meant, you know, people coming in. There were a couple of them while I was there, for example a special photography exhibit.

Q: I don't recall that we had any while I was there, except for the fair. That was really about the one effort that worked out. We had various things about our show windows that kept causing a certain amount of trouble, sparring matches.

GARTHOFF: Of course, this was a time at which plenty of attention was already being directed to what would happen in Yugoslavia when Tito passed from the scene. He was still there, but obviously getting along in years and in health. This led to a—I can't say, I don't know that it had any impact on the thinking back in Washington. I don't really know. But it did lead to a little round-robin of discussion among the three American embassies, in Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia, about what might happen and about, in effect, Bulgarian and Romanian and Yugoslav policies and interest in the Balkans and so on. This was initiated, as I recall, by our ambassador in Romania at the time, Barnes.

Q: Barnes. Oh, yes.

GARTHOFF: And Tom Simons, who was his DCM. I think they started it. Then Larry Eagleburger in Belgrade, and I joined in. So we had some fun, in any case, exchanging views in a speculative way. Of course, all this was reported back to the Department, but I don't recall that the Department ever reacted or entered into the dialogue. It was not an “action” matter, so there wasn't any call for it, but it was just what I think is, in fact, a relatively infrequent kind of communication among our posts.

Q: It's been done.

GARTHOFF: Oh, yes, it's been done. I know from just following traffic in general in Washington, and also, to some extent, from pouring over back files during my inspection work, I'm aware of some other cases where this has occurred.

Q: For a couple of years, we had Eastern European meetings in Vienna. This was mostly because John Humes was a very expansive operator and liked to entertain, so he'd get all of us up there. But it was a useful thing to do.

GARTHOFF: We didn't have anything like that. There was one while I was there, one of the usual meetings that involved ambassadors to European countries.

Q: Yes.

GARTHOFF: In London.

Q: You were talking about the Macedonian problem. I must confess that most of my efforts while I was there was to keep us from sticking our nose in the Macedonian problem in any sense, which Dick Davies, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary, handling Eastern Europe, seemed to me to be trying to do. [Laughter] So I protested this violently, and he

felt I was trying to support the Bulgarian view, which I was not at all. I was just trying to keep us out of it!

GARTHOFF: I don't remember the details. I remember also pursuing the same objective that you did, but I don't recall now what it was that occasioned having to make any comment or suggestion on it at all. It wasn't because of any inclination back in the Department at that time to do it, particularly.

Incidentally, I might just remark that in preparation for going to the assignment, I remember asking the Assistant Secretary, George Vest, “Anything in particular I should know? Anything in particular that you want to tell me for the assignment?” And he said, “Oh, Ray, you know better than I do the area.” So that was essentially it, my instructions from the Department on our policy and what to do. [Laughter] There was, naturally, the usual round of briefings and so on, but no particular policy guidance.

Q: Was there still any cooperation on drug traffic with Bulgaria, or had that started to fall out?

GARTHOFF: There was. It had started to diminish.

Q: Became less important, I suppose, because of other sources, but originally there was a great concern about the TIR truck traffic and all that.

GARTHOFF: Yes, there was still some concern. There was some Bulgarian cooperation and there was still some participation, but this is what I think had tailed down by our own Customs people, in conjunction with the Bulgarians. They had together run a little seminar, course, there. But we also got some indications of Bulgarian official involvement in drug trafficking, too, a Bulgarian agency involved in it. So there were two sides to the coin. On the one hand, they were cooperating.

Q: I was always very suspicious that maybe the objective was to find out how we operated.

GARTHOFF: It may have been, in part, simply to establish some good credentials. It may have been, in part, to drive out some of the opposition, close out some of the competition, because certainly there were some indications, I guess at that time, it was highly classified when I was there. Some of it now has come out in congressional testimony and so forth a couple of years ago, concerning the enterprise Kintex and some of its unsavory activities, in connection with probably letting some drug trafficking go on in exchange for, or in conjunction with, some arms smuggling and things that the Bulgarians were involved in for one or another nefarious purpose, going to Turkey and beyond into the Middle East.

Q: Not only about Bulgaria, but about certain other countries. [Laughter]

GARTHOFF: Yes, yes. Oh, yes. The other thing I was going to say about preparations for the job, I did spend about—well, nearly two months, which was most of the time I was, in effect, preparing to go over, studying Bulgarian.

Q: I tried hard, too, but I didn't have the background.

GARTHOFF: In fact, what we arranged was a native Bulgarian speaker, of course, instructress, giving a special little course, normally about eight hours a day, pretty intensive, for my wife, my DCM, and myself. All of us knew Russian, so we had that common foundation. Russian helps in recognition, but it also—

Q: Yes, I know that between Italian and Spanish.

GARTHOFF: Yes. There are a lot of cases where it can be very embarrassing, where the same or similar words have very, very different meanings between the two languages. At any rate, that did provide a foundation for it. The first year while I was there, I had normally an hour a day with a language instructor, and my wife did separately at home, also. The result was that I could read political sorts of things easily enough and I could understand a fair amount of it and I could, with just a little advance preparation, thinking about it and

so on, get out and give a toast in Bulgarian and that sort of thing. I found this was not necessary, but it was appreciated. It was helpful in some respects, especially traveling.

I did a fair amount of traveling, officially traveling, also, and arranged trips and so on. While most officials in Sofia spoke Russian and, of course, everyone in Bulgaria studied Russian, most Bulgarians don't really know the language at all well, and many of the provincial party and government officials and so on, whom I met, really didn't have very good Russian. Why should they disadvantage themselves by speaking another language? They would prefer—and did prefer—my speaking in far-from-fluent Bulgarian. So I suppose the net is that it was useful, if for nothing else, at least in showing that I had enough interest to have made the effort and to have learned the language to a certain extent and so on. All the more so, since my Soviet colleague, who had been there seven years, didn't speak Bulgarian. [Laughter]

I had a few very interesting, long conversations alone with Petr Mladenov, the foreign minister. I spoke Russian with him. But in many other cases and in few cases, of course, people like Andrei Lukanov always spoke English very well. But in other cases, like I got to know pretty well the Director of the National Art Gallery, and through him, got to know some Bulgarian artists and had them come into the residence for films about artists and art and so on, that I got through USIA. That kind of thing, we would do in Bulgarian. So while on rare occasion, where I was making some point in an official conversation with someone who didn't have English or where I didn't have a situation where I felt it appropriate to use Russian, where I would use—and an interpreter to back up—but normally, I just had the combination so that I could use Bulgarian where it was necessary or useful.

Q: You are certainly far superior to anything I ever achieved. I could ask a question, but not always understand the response. [Laughter]

I guess we'd better begin to wind this up, because we're getting towards the end of this tape, this side. Any other dramatic things that happened before you left? Did you leave

of your own choosing, or did they appoint somebody else first? I happened to have left of my own choosing, thinking they'd appoint somebody else right away, and they didn't. Took them a year.

GARTHOFF: No, I got a message saying that they wanted to, in effect, circulate more people. So I was there for just two years, a shade over two years, which was fine, but I would have been quite happy to stay another year. Insofar as it made any difference—and that's another question—by that time, I was at a point where I knew that to the extent I was having contacts and being comfortable in knowing the country more generally for all kinds of reporting and other purposes that it came to a conclusion. On the other hand, I was very happy to have been given the opportunity to have the assignment. Since it happened in a number of cases and so on, there was nothing particular about the fact; this was my two years.

Actually, I was put forward for another European embassy position at that time, which, however, went to a political appointment instead. A couple of other things were offered or under consideration for another assignment, but I had been contacted, before leaving Sofia, from Brookings, wanting to know whether I might be interested and available to go there after my then current assignment for a year or longer. And I got in touch and told them that, as a matter of fact, I was interested. I felt at that point that I wanted to turn, or return, to doing more research, reflection, and writing. So I opted for early retirement, for which I was by then eligible, and retired at the end of 1979. I began with Brookings and have been there for ten years. I'm not quite sure how long I'm going to do this, but it's very attractive, because they're paying me a good salary and providing half of a secretary with a word processor, a library, good offices, and everything else to do what I want to do.

Q: That's fabulous!

GARTHOFF: So from my standpoint, it's ideal. I have no administrative or other responsibilities.

Q: Absolutely great! You were just talking about the pleasures of life at Brookings. I think this business of what people do after they retire is very important. We can't go into all of it, obviously, but I'd like to get just a few minutes of it. I know you have a long list of publications. Will you tell us the major things you've been doing, not list by list, but any special meetings you've attended or projects you've carried on in the ten years you've been at Brookings?

GARTHOFF: Let me just say, preliminary to that, of course I had also considered going into the academic world. At the time I'd done my graduate work and gone through my doctorate at that point, and I had been involved both in research and in writing and publications and so forth, particularly while I was at RAND and, to some extent, in my subsequent years of government service, as well. So it was returning to an academic pursuit in some senses, rather than launching on to something unfamiliar when I made this particular change of course and went to Brookings.

I feel almost embarrassed at being as satisfied as I am with the way things have turned out overall in the years, and with the course of my whole professional career. I wouldn't, in retrospect, give up any of the experiences or assignments I've had, both before the Foreign Service or in it or since.

I've been working on the general field of US-Soviet relations and, in particular, wrote a major book called D#tente or Confrontation? US-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan, dealing in some detail with the whole development of our relations with the Soviet Union and across the board in the period from 1969 through 1980. I'm working on two projects now, one of which is a sequel to that, dealing with, again, the whole course of US-Soviet relations in the 1980s, '81 through whatever it will be, '89 or '90, that period.

I also continue to have a particular interest in the security and arms control field, which, of course, is one part, but only one part, of that general US-Soviet relationship and in the overall international security area. Again, going back to the interest I first developed 40

years ago, in what are, again, some interesting new developments in Soviet thinking on military affairs and security questions overall. So I've written a number of articles, chapters in various books, and now have a new book on Deterrence and the Revolution in the Soviet Military Doctrine.

I have been involved to some extent, although I find that I have to exercise discipline that isn't always easy to do in avoiding committing myself to too many of these things, so in many academic conferences, including, also, a number of seminars and conferences that Foreign Service Institute has conducted, but for the most part—

Q: Do you still lecture around at various War Colleges and universities and other things?

GARTHOFF: Very little. To some extent, I do. For example, I've probably been back, oh, perhaps six or eight times to Senior Seminar, and a few other—once, at least, to the Forum at the State Department and a few others in connection with activities of the Department, but mostly, of course, they've been academic university or Slavic Association or things of this sort, conferences, think-tank conferences under various auspices in this country and occasionally abroad. I do lecture at the National War College from time to time.

I have gone to the Soviet Union—oh, I guess it's been seven times in the last ten years, usually for a couple of weeks at a time, sometimes under the auspices of the Institute of US Studies there, or for particular conferences and the like.

One interesting thing that we spoke about a little earlier in connection with retrospective looks at the Cuban Missile Crisis, that has led to being involved initially simply as an individual with some Soviet scholars and writers in the field, but also in getting Soviet officialdom interested in doing such things as a joint retrospective look at the Cuban Missile Crisis, which actually involved a Politburo decision to sponsor the symposium they held in Moscow in 1989. And that's why Andrei Gromyko was willing to sit there for two

and a half days in discussion, although his contributions were rather guarded. He died not long after.

Q: Has the Atlantic Council been involved in that in some way?

GARTHOFF: The Atlantic Council has had a parallel contact that I have not been directly involved in. I was involved in the two Atlantic Council study groups here on relations with the Soviet Union and on arms control and international security. But no, this is separate from their set of meetings in the last couple of years. There are quite a few things under way now of this kind, and I've been associated with a few of them, as well as doing a lot of this on essentially an individual basis, that is, from Brookings, but on individual visits over and have had the advantage of knowing a number of the Soviet officials for 20, 25 years or more, some of whom had served here.

Q: There is a great continuity among the Soviets, much more than we have.

GARTHOFF: That's right. Now, some of them are going into retirement, of course, but it has meant that I've been able to have contact and have useful conversations with people not only in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and now Ministry of Defense, and also Central Committee apparatus on a number of these visits. That has been useful, in addition to people at the Institutes of USA Studies or Institute of International Relations and the like.

Q: This has been a great career, and is a continuing one. So I think we've got to come back with you in a few years. Now you've been at this for over three hours, and I don't know how you've stood it. It's been fascinating for me, and I appreciate it very much, indeed. We will perhaps reserve the right to continue this, or ask some more questions, another day.

GARTHOFF: Fine.

End of interview